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La raison de la philosophie... la philosophie est l'expression de la métaphysique... la philosophie est l'expression de la métaphysique... la philosophie est l'expression de la métaphysique...

Le devoir de la philosophie... la philosophie est l'expression de la métaphysique... la philosophie est l'expression de la métaphysique... la philosophie est l'expression de la métaphysique...

philosophy... the exercise of rationality... the expressions of mentally ill persons...

RATIONALITY AND ITS FINITUDE

BERNARD P. DAUENHAUER
University of Georgia

RATIONALITY AND ITS EXERCISE IS INTRINSICALLY FINITE. This general thesis, though debatable, is hardly new. Nor do all those who advance it understand it in the same way. In this brief paper I wish to specify one sense of this thesis and, without claiming to have definitively proven that this sense of the general thesis is true, to provide something of a justification for holding it. I will conclude by pointing out one of the important implications of the case I make here. I do not claim that the sense of the intrinsic finitude of rationality with which I deal here is either the only or even the most fundamental of the senses in which this general thesis can be legitimately held.

Briefly stated, the particular thesis that I wish to explore is: Rationality and its exercise is intrinsically finite because the exercise of rationality involves at least two mutually dependent, but distinct and irreducible, functions, namely the dogmatic function and the critical function. These functions cannot be taken to be either facets or dependent moments of one more fundamental operation. Nor is one of these functions definitively subordinable to the other. The justification for holding this particular thesis in considerable measure arises from the explication of precisely what the thesis involves and the assumptions that are implicit in it.

I

Explication of this Thesis

A. For present purposes, I adopt a maximally broad definition of rationality. Rationality is the capacity both to bring and to refrain from bringing one's

sensible experience —perceptual, imaginative, and pictorial— to expression and to preserve, perpetuate, and extend this expression by further expression. Though this expression can be accomplished in deed and in production as well as in word, I will here confine my discussion to verbal expression. My strategy in adopting this maximally broad definition is to have my remarks apply to any and every verbal utterance which can with any plausibility be taken to be a manifestation of rationality. Thus my definition encompasses what has traditionally been called wrong reason as well as right reason. It embraces both normal verbal expressions and abnormal ones, for example the expressions of mentally ill persons.

B. In advancing this thesis I assume that the exercise of rationality both is aimed at and is capable of achieving truthful expression. A minimal condition which must be satisfied for an expression to be truthful is that it must be meaningful. Here again, my strategy dictates that I define the term "meaningful expression" in a maximally broad way. Thus an expression is meaningful insofar as it is, in principle, recognizable to *anyone* as both in some fashion based upon the sorts of sensible experiences that are in principle accessible to more than one person and as experiences which the expressor could have refrained from bringing to expression. The only "test" to determine which experiences are of the sort that can be accessible to more than one person is sensible intuition. It follows from this definition that there is no meaningful expression which is accessible only to its author.

These maximally broad, intertwined definitions of rationality and meaningful expression stake out a field that is both closed and maximally extensive. This field includes expressions which take place in any historical or cultural context, whether familiar or unfamiliar to us. But the mere identification of this maximally extensive field still leaves open the issue of distinguishing within the field between truthful and untruthful expression. It is in conjunction with this latter issue, rather than in conjunction with the question of the extensiveness of the field of expression as a whole, that my thesis concerning the intrinsic finitude of the exercise of rationality is philosophically important.

C. In my thesis I make use of the standard distinction between the dogmatic and the critical functions of rationality. That is, the dogmatic function of rationality consists in straightforwardly making assertions both concerning the things, events, and states of affairs which are encountered in sensibly experiencing the world and concerning the principles, causes, and implications which are taken to be involved in what is encountered. In short, the dogmatic function consists in bringing to expression, by way of affirmation, denial, etc., the content of what is encountered in sensible experience, either

immediately or mediately. The critical function of rationality, on the other hand, consists in examining expressions concerning their worth or importance, from the standpoint either of their content, their origin, or their goal. The expressions subject to this examination may be either dogmatic expressions or previous critical expressions. Examples of types of critical activity are historical critiques, logical critiques, linguistic critiques, etc.

With these clarifications in hand I can now proceed to offer reasons for accepting my particular version of the general thesis concerning rationality's intrinsic finitude.

II

It must be borne in mind that every expression is 1) a particular expression, 2) uttered by someone, 3) addressed to someone (who can be anonymous), 4) such that it need not have been uttered, and 5) such that it purports to arise from some sensible experience that is in principle available to anyone. These characteristics of particular expressions lead to several consequences, three of which it will be useful to mention here.

First, the expression of what we sensibly experience is not a mere reflex reaction to what we encounter. Otherwise we could not refrain from a particular expression. Thus the world we sensibly experience shows itself as one which allows for initiative on our part.

Second, the sensible experience which I have and bring or refrain from bringing to expression is not in *all details* identical with that which everyone else has, even though in principle it is available to anyone. Otherwise, it would be pointless for the expression to be addressed to someone. He would be already in a position to express or refrain from expressing that experience.

Third, nonetheless our particular expressions are all aimed toward being truthful. That is, we are all interested, in all our expressions, in participating harmoniously in the world which we primordially experience. And this world is experienced as populated by other people, ancestors and descendants as well as contemporaries. Thus each of our expressions is oriented toward fitting harmoniously with the expressions of others as well as with both our sensible experience and theirs.

The upshot of these considerations, and this is directly pertinent to the particular thesis I am defending in this paper, is that each and every expression, each and every episode in the exercise of rationality, is in need of supplementation.

Particular expressions are open to supplementation in a number of ways. Though not all of these ways are relevant to the thesis I am here defending, the thrust of my thesis will be elucidated by noting two sorts of supplementation with which I am not concerned. For example, an expression *p* can be formally supplemented by not not-*p*. Likewise *p* can be materially supplemented by *q* in *p. q*. One might hold, that these sorts of supplementation reveal the finitude of rationality. That is, one might hold that the very discursiveness of the exercise of rationality establishes its finitude. Pascal, for example, apparently holds this. My thesis, however, does not hinge on the discursive character of rationality's exercise.

Again, one might hold that since every expression can be supplemented by other expressions which analyze it into its multiple constitutive moments, e.g. its syntax and its semantics, every expression, every episode of rationality's exercise is derivative from something more fundamental. And if the exercise of rationality depends upon something other than itself, then, one might conclude, rationality is intrinsically finite. This rather romantic line of thought is not germane to my thesis. My thesis does not hinge on rationality's need for something to express.

The sort of supplementation of an expression which is relevant to my thesis is not that which requires the introduction of some second expression. Rather it is the supplementation of one rational function which issues in an expression by another rational function which may or may not lead to some further expression. Specifically, the dogmatic function must be supplemented by the critical function and vice versa.

All expressions are, in the broad Husserlian sense, predicative. And all of them which occur in natural languages can be the outcome of either the dogmatic or the critical function of rationality. None of them can, in all respects, be the outcome of both functions.

In other words, one cannot tell just from a particular expression itself which function it issues from. There are no fixed catalogues of dogmatic expressions, on the one hand, and critical expressions, on the other. But every expression, from whichever function it issues, calls for an exercise of the other function. The force of these considerations can be elucidated by returning to the characteristics which belong of necessity to every particular expression.

As I mentioned above, each of our expressions is oriented toward being acknowledged as truthful. That is, each is oriented toward fitting harmoniously with the expressions of other persons as well as with both our sensible

experience and theirs. Thus, if I say *p*, I intend to bring to expression what I have encountered, immediately or mediately, in my sensible experience. I want to inform you both 1) that something determinate is available, in principle, for anyone to experience it, and 2) that in fact I myself have experienced it. My expression involves both a claim and an appeal to you to accept the claim as truthful, not merely as meaningful.

If we push the analysis of what is involved in uttering a particular expression, we find the following. If I say *p*, I intend *p* 1) to express what has, in this episode of experience, been encountered by me, 2) to be consonant both with what I have encountered and with what I have expressed in previous episodes, 3) to be capable of being harmonized with my subsequent experience, 4) to fit in with what you have encountered in sensible experience, and 5) to be compatible with what you say about what you have experienced.

But, according to my thesis, this complex intention cannot be definitively fulfilled. It can, at any specified moment, be only partially fulfilled. Each of the components of this complex intention can be fulfilled at least to some extent. But the fulfilling of the components of this intention depend upon distinct rational functions. For the most part, the first component of this intention which I named, namely the intention to express what I have encountered in experience, is fulfilled by the dogmatic function. The other components are fulfilled by the critical function in some one or more of its several modes.

Now in the very fulfilling of any of these components, there a corresponding loss of fulfillment in at least one of the other components. What Merleau-Ponty says concerning perception, namely that "perception entails a process of making explicit which could be pursued to infinity and which, ... could not gain in one direction without losing in another, and without being exposed to the risks of time",¹ holds good for all attempts to fulfill any of the complex components of the intention involved in uttering any particular expression. More specifically, the exercise of the dogmatic function of rationality requires a suspension of the exercise of the critical function and vice versa. But the suspended function must be subsequently reinstated if every one of the components of the complex intention involved in expression is to achieve even partial fulfillment.

Thus, there is a dialectical tension between the dogmatic and the critical

¹ M. MERLEAU-PONTY, *Phenomenology of Perception*, tr. by Colin Smith, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), p. 343.

functions of rationality. Neither function enjoys unequivocal primacy over the other. Neither is reducible to the other.

Further, this dialectical tension is not something required only by reason of the peculiarities of expression itself. Rather it arises from the endeavor of expression to articulate that which is encountered in sensible experience itself. That is, sensible experience itself is such that it can only be brought to expression by virtue of the dialectical tension between the dogmatic and the critical functions of rationality. As Alquié has pointed out, in other language than that which I am using here, sensible experience itself reveals the opposition between the given and the exigencies of reason. There can be no concrete comprehensive unity of experience or of its expression.² Thus the very texture of sensible experience requires that, if it be brought to expression in any fashion which claims to be both meaningful and truthful, both the dogmatic and the critical functions of rationality be both employed and kept in tension.

Put in other terms, the very texture of sensible experience lies at the basis of the distinction Ricoeur has drawn between a situation and a world. Expression of sensible experience in a situation is primarily an exercise of the dogmatic function of rationality. Expression of sensible experience belonging to a world is primarily an exercise of the critical function. Though I do not think that Ricoeur has adequately grasped the dialectic between situation and world, his distinction can be helpful in clarifying the irreducibility and equiprimordiality of these two functions in their orientation toward truthful expression.

But further, it must also be recognized that in the concrete exercise of these dialectically related functions, each function can, and often does, pose a threat or obstacle to the other function. This point has often been noticed, by Amiel for example, in connection with literature. Lavelle has made much the same point with reference to human creativity in general. It is precisely this inability to bring these two functions into comprehensive and definitive synthesis which constitutes the intrinsic finitude of rationality. And if rationality is, in this sense, intrinsically finite, then it is irrational to give priority to either of these functions and the expressions which issue primarily from it.

² FERDINAND ALQUIÉ, *L'Expérience*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1970), p. 105.

III

To illustrate something of the importance of this conclusion, I would like now to sketch briefly its impact on a specific region of expressive activity, namely politics.

Politics, as Aristotle has shown, belongs to the realm of speech. And speech, if it is to be authentic, must draw upon an already sedimented language and yet rise to a new saying, which is itself destined to rejoin the sedimented base for future sayings.³ If the authenticity in speech which is requisite for legitimate politics is to be achieved, then one must employ and keep in tension both the dogmatic and the critical functions of rationality.

The use of the dogmatic function enables one to give expression to the new phenomena he encounters. Without this expression of what is new in one's sensible experience, political discourse and conduct tends to be a mere ritualistic repetition of what has already been sedimented in expression on the basis of previous sensible experience. This way lies the dogmatism either of the merely habitual or of ideology. The dogmatic function of rationality thus tends to destabilize political dogmatism.⁴

But the dogmatic function above cannot fully insure against political dogmatism and ideology. There can develop, if only the dogmatic function is taken seriously, the tyranny of the here and now, the tyranny of an unhistorical *realpolitik*. The critical function of rationality is needed to fit the expression of one's own experience into the context of his audience, whether contemporaries or ancestors and descendents. It is likewise needed to fit his present expression into the context of his own previous experience. Without the critical function, the political community tends to dissolve into Babel.

But what I want to stress here is that neither of these functions enjoys primacy over the other. It is only through its members' exercise of the dogmatic function that a political community can respond to the exigencies of new situations. But it is only through their exercise of the critical function that the political community can sustain its identity over any considerable period of time. Neither function without the other can establish and maintain a genuine political community.

³ For a development of this point, see my "Renovating the Problem of Politics", *The Review of Metaphysics*, Vol. XXIX, No. 4, June 1976, pp. 626-641, and "Politics and Coercion", *Philosophy Today*, Vol. 21, No. 2, Summer, 1977, pp. 103-114.

⁴ Hannah Arendt has seen this. See her "Truth and Politics", in *Between Past and Future*, (New York: The Viking Press, 1968), pp. 227-264.

The irreducibility of these two functions in the political realm manifests the intrinsic finitude of rationality. What holds here could be shown to hold in every domain of human expression. But far from this finitude being unequivocally regrettable, this finitude is, as Alquié has said, a necessary condition for freedom.⁵ The finitude of rationality, then, is not an unfortunate condition. It is simply our condition.

EL PENSAMIENTO SOCIAL EN LAS AMÉRICAS

HAROLD EUGENE DAVIS

UN TÍTULO MÁS exacto para este ensayo podría ser "Algunos rasgos de la historia del pensamiento social de las Américas", porque es obvio que en el tiempo limitado a mi disposición, no puedo más que hacer un bosquejo de la materia, indicando unas pocas líneas de investigación y planteando algunos problemas.

Una dificultad inicial se encuentra en la frase misma *pensamiento social*. El significado de esta expresión, como se usa en Norteamérica, en el idioma inglés, es distinto de su significado en castellano. La diferencia semántica es importante desde el punto de vista de la comunicación de ideas exactas, pero es algo difícil de definir. Tengo la impresión de que en inglés usamos la frase en una acepción más amplia y al mismo tiempo menos exacta que la que tiene en castellano. En castellano el pensamiento social se define en general como la configuración de los conceptos básicos de una sociología. Por otro lado, en inglés usamos la frase con un sentido que abarca todos los conceptos del hombre y de la sociedad, incluyendo los principios de la economía, de la política, de la antropología filosófica, de la filosofía de la historia, así como las vinculaciones de estos conceptos e ideas con los principios de la ontología, la epistemología, la axiología, la ética, la estética, y agregando también los sentimientos y las creencias irracionales. Quizás es también un concepto sociológico, pero dentro del pensamiento anglosajona pragmática, el que da a la sociología un sentido más estricta. En todo caso, yo empleo la frase en este sentido.

Comienzo suponiendo la existencia de una historia más o menos inteligible de estas ideas sociales, pero no afirmo que su forma y su proceso sean siempre lógicamente inteligibles. Al hablar de las ideas del hombre tratamos de un segmento de la vida humana en su totalidad, racional e

⁵ ALQUIÉ, *op. cit.*, p. 106.